

USAID Abbreviated Report
MORE RESPONSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF
LAW IN GUYANA
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To assist in the development of the R4, the Partners are pleased to offer USAID this abbreviated report containing information about the achievements of the program, “More Responsive and Participatory Governance and Rule of Law in Guyana,” in the period January 27 to March 31, 2001.

This abbreviated report complements the two previous semi-annual reports, the first covering activities and results in the period January 27 to July 26, 2000, and the second covering the same in the period July 27, 2000, to January 26, 2001. It also complements the document entitled, “Performance Monitoring Plan Review.”

IR1 Improved and More Informed Law and Regulation-Making

In this period, the Partners’ efforts to achieve improved and more informed law and regulation-making were limited. The Conditions Precedent (CPs) prevented the Partners from conducting legislative activities, as did the country’s focus on elections, lengthened by their postponement from January until March. On account of the pre-election environment, the Partners were limited in conducting even assessments in this area.

IR1.1 Increased Technical Capacity for Law-Making and Regulations

Public Education on the Constitution

In February, with the Partners’ technical and financial support, the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL) implemented a program to educate the public about the new constitution, particularly the elections system.

- By providing the public with information about the revised constitution, the Partners helped to enhance the knowledge base that in turn will increase Guyana’s technical capacity to govern and be governed. In their evaluation forms, participants commented on the usefulness of the sessions, particularly the understanding they gained about their rights as citizens participating in the political process. Comments included the following:
 - “[The session] can help as a citizen to know my rights and exercise them.”
 - “[It will help me in] exercising my fundamental rights.”

Parliament Staff Assessment

- In March, the Partners conducted an informal assessment of the staffing needs of Parliament. This assessment will be important in future efforts to establish a functioning committee system, thereby establishing procedures for public input into the legislative process, and also in identifying alternatives to the CPs, enabling legislative work to move forward.

IR2 Increased Capacity to Resolve Disputes in a Timely Manner

The Partners' efforts to increase capacity to resolve disputes in a timely manner were limited in this period of January to March. Again, the CPs were not satisfied by the Government of Guyana and therefore no structured activities with the exception of assessment activity was possible.

Second, the disarray in the judiciary was intensified over the last four months of 2000 and continued into the first three months of 2001 by the battle over the Chancellorship of the judiciary. A new Chancellor will be appointed when the new Government is seated, but not before. Several judges' possible advancement are at issue and until the appointments are made no one in the judiciary is prepared to take actions or make statements of endorsement of or opposition to change in the judiciary. The judges do not want to be drawn into public discussion on reform, although TCC continued to have some private discussions about what would be possible after the elections.

Third, efforts to work within the Registry were severely hampered in this period by the preoccupation of the Registrar with two matters. She had a major responsibility to assist in administrative matters related to the issuance of the decision in the 1997 Elections Petition case and in preparation of the record on appeal in that case. This work took virtually all of her time and attention from January 10th to the end of March. Second, the Registrar was sued for contempt of court and found guilty of that offense by the court considering the matter. She therefore had to prepare her appeal, which is pending. At the same time, efforts were made to interdict her from performance of her duties until the court case was decided. This diverted her attention from initiation of the case flow management processes that she had undertaken to institute from January 1st.

By the admission of everyone, from Roger Luncheon to the judges and the Registrar to the lawyers, no attention to judicial reform will be given in Guyana until the elections are completed, a new Government is seated and a new Chancellor and Attorney General are in place. In fact, given the country's focus on elections and the increasingly bitter partisanship within the country, members of the legal community and those interested in alternative dispute resolution advised the Partners to refrain even from conducting the ADR assessment. Since the original work plan called for performance of the ADR assessment after the elections, the Partners felt it necessary to abide by this sequencing.

Notwithstanding the inability to do any structured or formal activities, efforts on a one-to-one basis were made to continue discussions of judicial reform and to introduce ideas and information on the subject to those within the judicial community and wider legal community.

IR2.1 More Efficient Judicial Processes Developed

Core Judicial Advisory Group

- The Partners began to identify potential members of the Core Judicial Advisory Group, intended to guide the planning and implementation of the Partners' judicial reform activities. However, the Partners decided to withhold official invitations pending the elections and political appointments by the new administration.

IR2.2 Management and Administrative Capacity of Courts Strengthened, Particularly for Case Flow Management

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period in any concrete, measurable manner. However, they believe that through continued discussion in this period with key judicial figures and key senior counsel on the concepts of case flow management and judicial reform and on the subject of establishing trial court performance standards (whereby the judges could take a stronger role in defining the expected performance of the court and could reorganize themselves to achieve their goals), a small constituency for reform, however fragile, is beginning to develop. Any serious, specific progress must await appointment of the Chancellor of the Judiciary, the Attorney General and other key posts.

- The Partners provided materials of direct relevance to court reform efforts in Guyana, which emanate from the National Center for State Courts from the United Kingdom and elsewhere. These materials, which included the monograph on Trial Court Performance Standards, met with considerable interest in a few critical instances.
- In addition to providing materials, the Partners worked with individuals to show them the extensive materials on case management and trial court performance available on the Internet. The response was very positive.
- Justice Carl Singh and attorney Anande Trotman used the materials the Partners shared with them.

IR2.3 Increased Capacity to Address Case Backlogs through Examination and Application of Promising Alternatives such as ADR

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period for the reasons stated above.

IR 3 Sustained Capacity to Conduct Free and Fair Elections

This period, the Partners contributed to building a sustained capacity to conduct free and fair elections in Guyana.

IR3.1 Establish and Institutionalize a Permanent Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM): Strengthened Capacity of Permanent GECOM

Technical Assistance

In this period, the Partners continued to provide coordination, information technology (IT), logistics, and procurement assistance to GECOM technical assistance to GECOM. The Partners have described the results of this assistance to the conduct of the March 2001 elections in IR3.2, “Strengthened Capacity to Conduct Free and Fair Elections.” At the same time, this assistance contributed to the achievement of this sub-IR.

- The Partners’ technical assistance to GECOM for the March 2001 elections will contribute to the institutionalization of GECOM’s capacity to conduct free and fair elections over time. After the elections, the Partners will work with GECOM to evaluate their work and record recommendations for the future, among other efforts.

IR3.2 Strengthened Capacity to Conduct Free and Fair Elections

Technical Assistance

As previously described, the Partners continued to provide coordination, IT, logistics, and procurement assistance to GECOM technical assistance to GECOM in this period, achieving the following results:

- Chief Technical Advisor assisted GECOM in developing a comprehensive electoral calendar and respecting the timeline of this calendar.
- Chief Technical Advisor helped GECOM in establishing procurement procedures for the purchase of equipment and materials for the Elections Commission and Elections Secretariat offices as well as for the materials and equipment needed to tabulate and store statements of poll.

- Chief Technical Advisor observed the conduct of election day procedures in District #4 (Georgetown) to ensure transparency in the distribution, processing and receiving of materials.
- Chief Technical Advisor took the initiative to assist in establishing the Regional Polling Office in Region 4. On election day, this office was responsible for receiving and compiling the results for the whole region and compiling the Statements of Polls, among other responsibilities. Chief Technical Advisor set up the computers and phones, organized staff, etc., stepping outside his terms of reference to meet this critical need.
- IT Advisor assisted GECOM in the transfer of voter registry to new server and in developing a transparent and efficient mechanism by which to make changes to the voter registry.
- IT Advisor aided GECOM in developing a mechanism for electoral staff in the field to report preliminary and final election results.
- Media Relations Advisor advised GECOM on improved methods of communicating its message regarding electoral information to the media.
- Media Relations Advisor supported GECOM in establishing an accessible media center, which released timely, accurate information to all interested media firms.
- Logistics and Communications Advisor assisted GECOM in developing clear, comprehensive tracking forms for the distribution of election materials and the processing of statements of poll received.
- Administration and Personnel Advisor gathered baseline information on the March elections regarding electoral management and procedures to record their current capacity and improve future capacity to conduct elections.

Materials Support

- At GECOM's request, the Partners provided information about the 1997 election effort to the Commission to assist it in preparing for the 2001 elections. GECOM also drew upon the knowledge of the Partners staff members who had supported the 1997 effort.

Domestic Election Observation

In an effort to promote public confidence in the election process, the Partners gave a subgrant to the Electoral Assistance Bureau, a non-partisan domestic election monitoring group, to conduct domestic observation of the March 19, 2001, elections and other related activities.

- The EAB, as accredited election observers, fielded approximately 1000 volunteers to observe the election process on election day. As of March 23, they monitored and reported on 995 polling stations representing 52.7% of all polling stations, which accounted for 230,555 valid votes cast or 58.6% of total valid votes cast (based on GECOM data). The observers were present from the opening to the close of the polls. They observed the count, and collected count information and in some cases copies of the Statements of Poll.
- Additionally, EAB hosted a hotline on election day where members of the public were able to call in to get relevant election information. The hotline was a 14-hour operation involving eight telephone lines and seven computers. Most of the 1000 calls received were inquiries on whether names were on the list, advice sought on place to vote and queries on omission from the list. This was an extremely valuable service offered by EAB on election day, especially considering that GECOM's ability to offer this service on election day was not enough to meet the demand. GECOM expressed appreciation for EAB's overall assistance, particularly in this area. *Stabroek News* and *The Guyana Chronicle* – both daily newspapers – published the EAB's hotline number on the front page of its newspaper on election day.
- The media monitoring program was conducted by two professors and students of the Social Sciences faculty of the University of Guyana with the aim of measuring the media bias of the print and electronic media of the state and selected private media outlets. The focus was on the quantity and quality of references by each media house. These were determined by allocation of space and bias types respectively. Two reports have been completed thus far.
- EAB conducted a field test of the Revised Voters List using the CD containing the same. EAB generated a random sample of 1200 names from across the country, and 52 students from the University of Guyana went out to find these persons. They found 93.1% of the sample. EAB could have obtained a more accurate result had it not been for the difficulty in locating some house lots and identifying persons by their call names. EAB also conducted a test to identify duplicate registrations on the RVL. The organization found nine duplicate registrations. EAB shared all these findings with GECOM.
- GECOM made use of EAB's "Instructions to Local Observers" in training its pollworkers.
- The March 17, 2001, edition of The Economist magazine featured the work of EAB.
- EAB issued two post-election statements in which it drew definitive conclusions. In the statement dated March 20, for example, EAB wrote, "notwithstanding the list concerns below, the EAB is satisfied that the validity of the voting process was acceptable." It listed concerns including: shortage of ink, the Official stamp,

and other supplies; frustration on the part of citizens who registered but could not vote; and reportedly threatening behavior by a few citizens toward GECOM and EAB representatives at some polling stations.

Public Education on the Constitution

GAWL invited a representative of GECOM to accompany its trainers to the sessions it organized around the country to educate the public about the new constitution, particularly the election system. The GAWL devoted a portion of each session to the GECOM representative to discuss the voting process. Thus, the activity helped to ensure that the March 2001 elections would be free and fair.

- In their evaluation forms, participants noted that the sessions would help them on voting day. Comments included the following:
 - “The most interesting thing was explaining how you must put your X or it would not count. The session... was very good explaining to those who are voting for the first time.”
 - “Well for me the most interesting part of this session was concerning, if you don’t have [an] ID card there are other ways which you can be identified.”

IR4 Civil Society Influences Public Policy

This period, the Partners continued to help civil society influence public policy. On account of the tense pre-election environment, the Partners were unable to select the target non-governmental organizations (TNGOs) to receive organizational strengthening training, or to conduct the training. They did, however, succeed in creating criteria for the selection of these groups. They also conducted other civil society activities around the elections that contributed to achievement of the IR.

IR4.1 Increased Networking and Consensus-Building Capacity Among NGOs within the Three Identified Populations

Youth Candidates Forum

The Partners supported the efforts of The Youth Alliance for Electoral Awareness (The Alliance), a coalition of youth groups, in organizing a forum for candidates to interact with young people and address issues of importance to the youth community. This activity is described in greater detail under IR4.3 and IR4.4.

- With advice from the Partners, The Alliance succeeded in bringing together five youth groups and cooperatively staging a successful event.

Public Education on the Constitution

- With the Partners' support, GAWL succeeded in reaching out to other groups to recruit trainers for the sessions, and in working cooperatively with GECOM's Voter Education Unit, in its program to educate the public about the new constitution.

IR4.2 Increased Organizational and Analytical Capacity of a Subset of TNGOs Representing the Three Identified Populations

Youth Candidates Forum

- While the Partners did not select the youth organizations comprising The Alliance or The Alliance itself as a TNGO to which to provide organizational strengthening support, the result of the Partners' support to The Alliance's Youth Candidate Forum was stronger organizational capability of these groups.
- Similarly, the Partners' guidance to GAWL, from the proposal-drafting stage (which predates this report) to discussions about improving the sessions, contributed to the organizational development of that group.

IR4.3 Increased Capacity to Advocate for Improvements in the Status of Each of the Three Targeted Segments of Civil Society

IR4.4 Increased Public Debate on Issues Affecting the Three Identified Populations

Youth Candidates Forum

Many of the youth groups with which the Partners consulted commented on the lack of forums that allowed young people to question representatives and candidates of the political parties contesting the elections about their proposed policies and programs. A few months prior to the March 19 elections, youth groups (University of Guyana Students' Society, Volunteer Youth Corps, Entertainers Making A Difference, Guybernet and the Janus Young Writers Guild) came together to form The Alliance to create such a forum.

As a result, The Alliance decided to organize a Youth Candidates Forum. The objective of the forum was to provide, in a medium that reflected Guyanese youth culture, an opportunity for young people to interact with the electoral candidates and view the parties' campaign platforms. The forum, entitled "Present Leaders meet Future Leaders," was held as a street fair, thereby promoting a friendly, casual environment conducive to meaningful interaction between youth and candidates.

The forum was held in front of the Tower Hotel on Main Street on Friday, March 9, 2001, between 14:00hrs and 21:00hrs. The Alliance invited all the political parties that were contesting the regional and presidential elections to participate.

- Six political parties participated in the event: four (PNC/R, PPP/C, TUF, GAP-WPA) erected booths, and two (JFAP, GNC) walked around distributing literature and answering questions from the attendees.
- Several prominent candidates from the four parliamentary parties were engaged in the event.
 - In the PPP/C booth, Minister Of Youth, Culture and Sports Gail Texeira, Minister of Foreign Affairs Clement Rohee, Monica Benn, and Chitra Dass (WPO) were present. Young people bombarded Texeira and Rohee with questions.
 - In the PNC/R booth, various candidates at differing intervals were present. At one instance there were more than ten candidates from the party in the booth. Stanley Ming, Eric Phillips, Sherwood Lowe, Supriya Singh, Fenton Fraser, Raphael Trotman, Artie Ricknauth, Clarissa Rheil, and Dennis Glasglow were among those present. In addition to the battery of candidates, the PNC/R booth also had audio–visual aids to further explain their party’s platform. Mr. Hoyte, the presidential candidate of the PNC/R, also visited the Forum.
 - In the GAP/WPA booth, Rupert Roopnarine, the party’s prime ministerial candidate, was present for the duration of the event. He answered numerous questions and enquires from attendees.
 - In the TUF booth, presidential candidate Manzoor Nadir was also present for the duration of the event.
- From the commencement of the event at 3:30 pm there were about 300 persons present. This number peaked to about 700 at about 5:00 pm (according to the Chronicle reporter). The after-cricket rush according to police estimates saw about 3000 persons in attendance between the hours of 5:30 and 8:30 when the activity concluded.
- Both the PNC/R and the TUF requested extensions of the closing time since there were still numerous persons crowding their booths requesting information and asking questions.
- The political parties are all on record praising the initiative and the creativity of the methodology in getting so many young people to attend. They also expressed some surprise at the number of questions and concerns the young people had since they thought they had address these questions and concerns through their

various campaign activities. All the political parties expressed their gratitude to the organizers for staging the event and giving them the opportunity to interact with the young people and sharing their proposal and policies if elected to office.

- All the television newscasts and *The Guyana Chronicle* newspaper reported on the event. The March 17, 2001, edition of The Economist magazine also featured the event.
- The Partners intended for these activities to raise the profile of these targeted constituencies, who are also voters, and in turn have an impact on the political party platforms contesting the elections.

Civil Society Candidates Forum

Similar to the Youth Candidates Forum, the Partners supported the efforts of the NGO Forum, an umbrella group of civil society organizations, in organizing a forum where civil society could interact with candidates and explore with them issues of concern to civil society. The Partners and Building Community Capacity Project (BCCP), a CIDA-funded project, collaborated in financing the event. The forum was held on Saturday, March 3, 2001, at the Ocean View Convention Centre in Greater Georgetown.

- A wide cross-section of Guyanese civil-society attended the event, as well as members of the diplomatic corps.
- Presidential or prime ministerial candidates from four of the political parties contesting the elections attended: Roopnaraine (GAP/WPA), Ravi Dev (ROAR), Manzoor Nadir (TUF), and Joseph Bacchus. Each candidate made a five-minute presentation about the role their party will allot to civil society if their party wins the election. They then answered questions from the audience.
- The *Stabroek News* newspaper reported on the event. The article accounted in detail the proceedings and also pointed out that the candidates from the two major parties, the PNC/R and the PPP/C, were absent.
- Political activist Jocelyn Dow called the Youth Candidates Forum “very good.”

Public Education on the Constitution

As previously discussed, GAWL organized workshops to respond to the need for civic education on the new constitution, particularly the electoral system. The group supplemented the workshops with live interactive radio and television programs on the subject by members of GAWL. The public sessions were also taped and aired on radio and television.

This program will continue after the elections, where issues such as the role of standing committees and other concepts introduced in the new constitution will be discussed.

- GAWL held more than eight workshops in 4 regions in Guyana with an approximated 280 persons attending. Whilst targeting and ensuring the active participation of youths and women, a wide cross-section of Guyanese attended the workshops.
- GAWL was the only civil society organization undertaking constitutional reform and electoral education.
- In their evaluation forms, all of the participants rated the sessions “excellent” or “good.” Comments included the following:
 - “Come again and we will invite more people.”
 - “It will help a whole lot. We will continue to need [your] help.”
 - “[There] are a lot of persons in the area [who] need advice.”
 - “[It will help by] standing up for our rights.”
 - “I can now help my group of friends.”
 - “[The session] should have taken 1 whole day.”
- The Partners also received feedback from participants on how to further increase public dialogue on constitutional issues. Participants recommended, among others, the following:
 - “A call-in programme. More public meetings.”
 - “More face-to-face sessions for the public, visit to schools, churches, etc.”
 - “Through the media, posters and hand-outs.”
- A leading feminist activist, Vanda Radzik, told the Partners that she thought the program was very good and important, that she learned new information herself, and that the questions the participants asked were interesting. She commented that the president of GAWL is “solid as a rock.”
- A Haitian-American, who was in Guyana as an elections observer for the Organization of American States, attended a session in Linden. He informed the Partners that he was “pleased and impressed” by the session, and that it was of “high caliber.” He also expressed an interest in duplicating the activity in Haiti.

*IR4.5 More Informed Media Discussions of Issues Affecting the Status of the
Three Identified Populations*

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period.

IR5 Strengthened Local Governance

On account of the attention being paid to the elections and the ongoing constitutional reform process, the Partners decided to postpone conducting a local government program until after the elections and once the country has completed the reform process. Any activity the Partners did conduct in this area predates this report.

*IR5.1 Strengthened Management and Technical Capacity to Respond to
Communities' Needs*

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period for the reasons stated above.

IR5.2 Role of Local Government Further Defined and Rationalized

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period for the reasons stated above.

*IR5.3 Dialogue Promoted Between Local Government Entities and
Affected Communities*

The Partners did not progress toward achieving this sub-IR in this period for the reasons stated above.